



HELP YOUR HEART, HELP YOUR LIFE

Heart disease is the number one killer of both men and women in the United States.¹ Heart disease is a disease of the heart and blood vessel system often related to atherosclerosis, or the buildup of plaque in the arteries.² The good news is that in many cases heart disease is preventable and by taking actions now to improve your heart health, you can reduce your risk for developing heart disease. In addition, by working to improve your heart health you are also helping to reduce your risk for developing other chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cancer, and stroke. If you already have been diagnosed with heart disease or another chronic condition, making heart-healthy choices can help manage symptoms and reduce the risk of complications due to disease.

Heart Health and Chronic Disease

A chronic disease is a condition that affects your health over a long period of time – for a year or more – that requires ongoing medical attention and affects your daily life.³ Half of all Americans, or 117 million people, have experienced at least one chronic condition.⁴ It’s also not uncommon for individuals to have multiple chronic diseases since almost 25 percent of adults have more than one chronic condition.⁴ In addition, having one condition may increase your likelihood of being diagnosed with another. For example, adults with diabetes are at least twice as likely to have heart disease or a stroke than adults without diabetes.⁵ Fortunately, most chronic diseases can be prevented or managed through the same healthy lifestyle choices.

Risk Factors for Heart Disease^{6, 7, 8, 9}

Heart disease is a complex problem. There are many factors that contribute to the development of heart disease, such as unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, and obesity, and these are the same risk factors for developing other chronic conditions such as stroke, diabetes,* and cancer** as shown. For more detailed information about heart disease risk factors and how to address them, check out [Heart Health: Risk Factors and Lifestyle Choices](#).

RISK FACTORS



| | HEART DISEASE | STROKE | DIABETES | CANCER |
|---------------------|---------------|--------|----------|--------|
| Diabetes | ⊙ | ⊙ | | |
| Too much alcohol | ⊙ | ⊙ | | |
| High blood pressure | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ | |
| High cholesterol | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ | |
| Physical inactivity | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ | |
| Unhealthy diet | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ |
| Obesity | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ |
| Tobacco use | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ |
| Genetics | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ |
| Age | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ |
| Race or ethnicity | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ | ⊙ |

*Diabetes is a chronic condition, but it is also a direct risk factor for heart disease.

**Risk factors included here are not comprehensive of all risk factors for all cancers, but highlight risk factors that overlap with heart disease risk factors.



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How to Improve Heart Health to Prevent Chronic Diseases

Since many chronic diseases have the same risk factors as heart disease, by making healthy lifestyle changes to improve your heart health you are also taking steps to improve your overall health and well-being. Steps you can take that have a positive impact on your heart health include:

- ▶ Eat a healthy diet. For healthy and delicious food ideas, read [Indulge Your Taste Buds, and Your Health](#).
- ▶ Be physically active. Engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise each week to reduce the risk of chronic disease.
- ▶ Schedule annual appointments with your primary care provider.¹⁰
- ▶ Check your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers. Check out the [Know Your Numbers Infographic](#) for a reminder of healthy readings.
- ▶ Avoid using tobacco. Having trouble quitting? Use the [Starter Kit to Quit Tobacco](#) to help you get started.
- ▶ Maintain a healthy weight.
- ▶ If you consume alcohol, only drink a moderate amount.¹¹ This means no more than four drinks per day and no more than 14 drinks per week for men. For women, this means no more than 3 drinks per day and no more than 7 drinks per week.

Managing Heart Health and Chronic Disease

If you've already been diagnosed with heart disease or another chronic disease, taking care of your heart can help manage your symptoms and prevent complications. When managing a chronic disease such as heart disease or diabetes, it is important to work together with your medical providers to determine the best approach for you. Work with your primary care provider and medical home team to:

- ▶ Understand your diagnosis and other conditions that could be related to or affected by heart disease. For example, individuals with heart disease are more likely to suffer from depression.¹²
- ▶ Develop a care plan tailored to you and your conditions, which may include medications, specialist care, and health and wellness resources.
- ▶ Learn to properly self-manage your diseases and symptoms to avoid any unnecessary trips to the emergency department.
- ▶ Incorporate the correct physical activity and diet into your life based on your condition(s) and any medications you are taking.
- ▶ Find and sign up for community resources that can help you improve your health outside of the doctor's office, such as a healthy cooking class or a diabetes self-management course.

Learn More

To schedule an appointment to learn more about how to prevent or manage chronic disease, contact your local medical home or health care team:

To learn about local community resources to help you stay healthy, contact the health promotion coordinator or director at your local MTF:

¹ Heart Disease Facts. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>. Updated 10 August 2015. Accessed November 2015.

² What is Cardiovascular Disease? http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Caregiver/Resources/WhatsCardiovascularDisease/What-is-Cardiovascular-Disease_UCM_301852_Article.jsp#.VmZ0jbrLIU Updated 18 December 2014. Accessed December 2016.

³ Ashman J, Beresovsky V. Multiple chronic conditions among U.S. adults who visited the doctor: data from the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey, 2009. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2013;10:120308.

⁴ Ward BW, Schiller JS, Goodman RA. Multiple chronic conditions among US adults: a 2012 update. *Prev Chronic Dis*. 2014;11:130389. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd11.130389>.

⁵ Diabetes, Heart Disease, and Stroke. National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Institutes of Health (NIH). <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/stroke/#connection>. Published August 2013. Accessed November 2015.

⁶ Heart Disease Risk Factors. Centers for Disease Control and prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/risk_factors.htm Updated 10 August 2015. Accessed December 2015.

⁷ Stroke Risk Factors. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/stroke/risk_factors.htm Updated 17 March 2014. Accessed December 2015.

⁸ Preventing Diabetes. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/prevention.html>. Updated 10 September 2015. Accessed December 2015.

⁹ Risk Factors for Cancer. National Cancer Institute. <http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk>. Posted 29 April 2015. Accessed December 2015.

¹⁰ 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf>. Published October 2008. Accessed December 2015.

¹¹ National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Rethinking Drinking: Alcohol and your health. http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/RethinkingDrinking/Rethinking_Drinking.pdf. Revised October 2015. Accessed December 2015.

¹² Depression and Heart Disease. National Institute of Mental Health. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression-and-heart-disease/index.shtml> Accessed December 2015.